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Turkestan, but he never conquered India. He crossed the frontier, the Indus, was opposed on the next line of defence, the Jelum (Hydaspes), reached the limit assigned in Rawlinson's Herodotus to the Persian province, the Beas, or Hyphasis, and there he turned back. He no more conquered India than Xerxes conquered Europe; but there was this difference, that his officers forced him to turn back, whereas defeat turned back Xerxes. Let any one lay before him a map of India, and trace the advance of Alexander from the Indus to the Beas, and then his backward course down the Indus, and he will ever afterwards smile at the idea of calling him a conqueror of India. Orientals have not all the hyperboles to themselves.

Seleucus held Afghanistan, and held at least a portion of Alexander's conquests in India, which country he personally visited. But he never attempted the conquest of it. The Seleucidæ and the Greek Bactria long held Afghanistan, and attempted to extend—perhaps did extend—the old Perso-Greek province. But as to India, they were never anything but a little power in the north-western corner.

For nine hundred years, extending from Alexander's incursion to the next formidable attack, India enjoyed an exemption from the curse of any serious foreign invasion; a rare exception in the history of great nations. Yet this is the country that men say has always been the prey of every conqueror, always been subdued by the master of Afghanistan.

It was the Arabs who appeared at the end of the nine hundred years; and if I have called their attack formidable, it was only because of their conquering name. As early, in their first flame of Mahomedan zeal, as A.D. 664 they had carried the banner of the Prophet to Kabul. They invaded India, not from Afghanistan, but from Beloochistan. All they accomplished was to seize some possessions on the Indus, which ere long were won back by the Hindus, and by them retained for five hundred years. Yet the Arabs are duly reckoned among the conquerors of India!

No less than thirteen centuries had passed from the days of Alexander, before a movement was made by the originators of the one real conquest which took place before our own. Naturally that vast space of repose does not figure in the history of Indian conquest, and consequently makes no impression on the imagination. India is often compared to Italy; and in physical position it offers fair grounds for the comparison. But if, after Pyrrhus, Italy had been exempt from foreign invasions of any consequence down to the time of Henry IV. and Hildebrand, what a theme of wonder would that lapse of favoured ages have afforded to the writers of the West.

The eleventh century had already opened before the Turki-Afghan, Mahmud, King of Guzni, crossed the Indus. The Oriental Translation Fund, among its many services, has published a *Life of Mahmud and his father*, which bears on its title the neat assumption by the translator that those two princes were "Conquerors of Hindustan." Taking Hindustan as Hindustan Proper, it was just to call the son a conqueror in Hindustan, not of it; but the father had no claim to either title. All he did was to beat back Hindu aggression from off his own ground. A Rajah in the Punjab, irritated at the growing and insolent power of an ex-slave, marched up the Kyber Pass to put him down. Somewhere near Jellalabad he was met by Sabaktagin, and compelled to come to terms. Those terms he violated, and now Sabaktagin prepared to be the aggressor in his turn. The Rajah, however, anticipating him, again entered the Kyber with several confederates, and on the same plain as before was met and defeated. That was outside the boundaries of India; but though it gave the victor of the day no claim to be, even in Europe, called a conqueror of India, his success proved the incitement to recommence the enterprise which Alexander and the Arabs had reluctantly abandoned. A pock-marked lad that day first fleshed his sword,—a sword which afterwards waved in triumph on the shores of the Caspian and the Upper Ganges, of the Oxus and the Persian Gulf. The proud rajahs had reason to rue

the day when they gave to the young Mahmud his first relish of a triumph. His military genius only needed such an awakening. Amid his widespread conquests in other directions, he found time to conduct no less than twelve or thirteen expeditions into India. As predatory raids these were perfectly successful, yielding to the hero vast booty and countless prisoners; but as to territory he never to the last held more than that attached to Lahore.

The dynasty of Mahmud lasted above a century and a half; possessing not only Afghanistan, but most of the Punjab. Did they conquer India? Why, their territory never extended within a thousand miles of either Calcutta or Madras. Yet when a new dynasty—true Afghans—replaced them, the event is called a fresh conquest of India. This second Moslem dynasty rapidly pushed forward; but India did not prove so easy a prey in the field as it does on paper; for even Delhi was not reduced till one hundred and ninety years after Mahmud began his invasion, and full two centuries passed from the time when he broke the idol of Somnath before the Faithful were masters of Bengal. At that time the Deccan had not been attempted. We ought at this point to have been able to look back on four or five conquests of India, on four or five instances in which the possession of Afghanistan had put Persian, Greek, Arab, Afghan of Guzni, and Afghan of Ghor in command of India. Instead of this we have found three failures to conquer the country, and one progressive effort by two dynasties which at the end of two hundred years does effect a conquest of the Basin of the Indus and the Basin of the Ganges, but leaves untouched both the central mountain region and the Deccan. And as to the facts there is no conflict of authorities whatever.

At the fall of the second dynasty of Afghans, war broke out between the prince who held Lahore and the one who held Guzni. It was not the master of Afghanistan who won India, but the master of the Punjab who took Guzni, only, however, to be in turn expelled. Ferishta, the Mahomedan

historian, so far from inferring that India went with Afghanistan, uses the vague title King of India for the first time when speaking of the capture of Delhi, saying that the general who had effected it might be said to have become King of India. This general was a slave; yet the heir of his master who retained the hereditary kingdom of Afghanistan, so far from concluding that the master of the plateau must be master of India, at once recognized the ex-slave as king, because says Ferishta, "he was by no means able to oppose his power" (vol. i. p. 198). Henceforth the simple problem becomes a complex one. We have no longer before us merely one continuous effort of a foreign power to subdue the whole continent, but side by side with this at intervals another effort, that of fresh Moslems from the West to supplant those already in possession. It was this last and subordinate movement alone which people in the West could see, so that to them every Mussulman leader who replaced another was a conqueror of India.

Genghis Khan is often named to swell the roll of happy men who seized the easy prey. But he had not even the cheap title acquired by overturning a Mahomedan dynasty. He did indeed conquer Afghanistan, and advanced to the Indus, but doing less than even the Greeks or Arabs he never crossed the stream. So were the Faithful in Hindustan delivered from that scourge. Genghis Khan had been turned back, as long previously Alexander had been, by the prospect of opposition following on the exhaustion of approach.

An illustration of what went on in the rear of any invader is supplied incidentally by Ferishta, when narrating the origin of the Khilji dynasty. It was, he says, when Genghis Khan was retreating from the Indus that Kalij, "being well acquainted with the mountainous country, watched his opportunity to throw off his allegiance," and so founded a power of his own.*

The Moguls during the thirteenth century often tried to

* Ferishta, i. 286.

make up for the failure of Genghis Khan. They sent expedition after expedition of which at least eleven are mentioned by Ferishta, and all of which were driven back. At length a force of two hundred thousand horse penetrated to the gates of Delhi. But at that time a strong prince was in possession, and if he had neglected the frontier, he sallied out and beat back the two hundred thousand from before the walls, and forced them to quit the country.

The fourteenth century had hardly opened when once more the Moguls appeared. They were met by the Governor of the Punjab, who had often made havock of them before, and now chased them to the mountains, sending at the same time such grisly trophies to Delhi that the king built a pillar of their skulls. Yet another horde came down, and the doughty Tog-luck of the Punjab, not content with beating them, gave chase as far as Kabul and Guzni, capturing both cities. Here again it was not Afghanistan that mastered India.

Some score of years later came another Mogul horde, and reached Delhi, where the king bought it off. He who had done that mad act in a few years did another. He sent through the passes of the Himalaya a hundred thousand horse to invade China. They did get through the passes, but worn out. They were met by a Chinese army fresh and at home, which drove them back into the passes, where nearly all perished.

A new struggle, long discernible, came out prominently by the end of the fourteenth century—the struggle of the Mahomedans among themselves for a centralized empire on the one side, and for independent states on the other. Tamerlane, taking advantage of this conflict, sent an army against India; but after six months, his grandson who commanded was no further forward than Moulton in the Punjab. So he came in person, took Delhi, filled it with horrors, and then added another name to the list of those who intending a conquest accomplished only an invasion. How fully he had intended a conquest appeared from the fact that he had caused himself to be proclaimed

Emperor of India, and had commanded his own name as such to be inserted in the prayers used in the mosques.

Delhi was in a state of distraction and disorder when Baber, a descendant of Genghis Khan, watched it from Kabul. Already five hundred years had passed since Mahmud set up his standard in India, yet extensive Hindu states, such as that of Bijanugger, continued to exist. As in all preceding history, so in those five hundred years, no invader who before reaching India was obliged to pass the Hindu Koosh had established himself in the country. But like Mahmud Baber started with the Koosh behind him, and Afghanistan for his base. Like him also he had to face, not a strong central power, but divided and contending states. On the plain of Paniput Baber gained a bloody but complete victory. For once the loose phrase about the fate of India being decided by a single battle might now be seriously employed. Yet the battle of Paniput did not decide the fate of India in any such way as, five centuries earlier, the battle of Hastings had decided the fate of England. "We must not confound," says Mountstewart Elphinstone, "the acquisition of the few distracted districts held by Ibrahim with the subjugation of India." Baber's victory cleared away the impotent chiefs whose wars he had watched from Kabul for two-and-twenty years, and enabled him to set up the dynasty which we call that of the Moguls. Under that dynasty was the country at last reduced to what might be called one Empire. That, however, had not taken place even in the days of Acbar; but it came to pass in those of his grandson, Shah Jehan, and of his great-grandson Aurungzebe. As to Baber himself, however, so far from ever having conquered India, he performed the last act of his dramatic career in a brilliant struggle for Behar and Oude.

Hamayun, the son of Baber, driven out of his empire, after a while recovered Afghanistan, not venturing for ten years to attempt India till he found those in possession engaged in a tripartite broil. What he bequeathed to Acbar was not the throne of India, but "of the Punjab, and the country round

Delhi and Agra." The brother of Acbar who ruled in Afghanistan hoped that the master of Kabul might have India at his mercy, and attacked the Punjab. He was driven back, followed up, beaten out of Kabul, and by his generous brother restored. Once more, then, it was the possessor of India who mastered Afghanistan.

Jehangir has this much of historical connexion with Afghanistan;—being seized by one of his own generals he was carried off to the mountains; but his celebrated queen, Noor Jehan, when once she got the general among the passes, outwitting and enveloping him, rescued the emperor.

Shah Jehan, who merited for the first time the title of Sovereign of India, attempted the conquest of Balkh from Afghanistan as his base. Though conducted by Aurungzebe, the expedition failed. Moreover, the Persians took from him Kandahar; and the possession of Afghanistan, with Hindustan to boot, did not enable him to recover it.

Aurungzebe, the wily son of Shah Jehan, might for a while be excused if he said that all India was under one head; for at least all Mahomedan princes owned his supremacy. However, ere yet his power had been seriously broken, when a victory in the field had at last been gained over his generals by the Mahrattas, and when consequently his presence was required in the south, he was called away northward, and for two years—years critical beyond what he foresaw—was engrossed by a petty and bootless war with the tribes of North-East Afghanistan.

When Aurungzebe did turn to the south, he was resolved to make an end of ill-chances, and to have a scientific frontier resting on the sea, a frontier which no one had ever attacked, and which could be defended not merely by five thousand men, but by no men at all. But when, after a long struggle for that frontier, the haggard old man of fourscore-and-nine led his mangled forces into Ahmednugger, and laid him down to die, he looked out on an empire harassed and beginning to break up, and must have bitterly felt that the first deadly

blows were unexpectedly dealt by the despised Mahratta hordes prowling in his rear while he was imperially advancing towards his scientific and self-defending frontier. Probably he would curse the clans on that bit of north-western border in trying to put down which he had lost two years at the very juncture when he ought to have been crushing the rising foe.

It took seven hundred years ere the Empire of the Moslems culminated with Aurungzebe, but with him did it begin to crumble, and after him, in a comparatively little time, it became the prey of the Mahrattas, and in a little more the property of English traders.

As we have found the period of strong government beginning with Achar and ending with Aurungzebe free from foreign invasion, we at its close naturally look round to see what will be the effect of the return of feebleness. It found a Nadir Shah ready. His pretext was drawn from an occurrence in Afghanistan where in the mountains a messenger of his was murdered on his way to the Government of Delhi. Here, then, was another invader who had to cross the Hindu Koosh. We have found that none of the others who did so succeeded in subduing India; did this one succeed? He won battles, sacked Delhi, slaughtered frightfully, and after two months marched back, retaining nothing beyond the Indus.

So weak had the Moguls now become, that Ahmed Shah attempted to reach Delhi with a force of twelve thousand men; but they were still too strong for that. He, however, like Mahmud and Baber, had not to march over the Hindu Koosh, having his centre—as they had—in Afghanistan. After returning in force more than once, he finally, at Paniput, the scene of Mahmud's victory, gave the Mahrattas a terrible overthrow. This great triumph, however, did not put the victor in possession of India, for he was soon back again in territories where he would not have such foes to meet, and never crossed the Sutlej more. But in one sense his battle decided the fate of India. Had it been won by the Mahrattas, they would at once have been the paramount power in the country, and

would have been able to check the English, who four years earlier had, under Clive, fought the strange fight of Plassy. Ahmed Shah, by shattering the Mahrattas, had opened the way for the unforeseen power of the East India Company.

From this outline of facts, we may see that we are not as safe in making general assertions as people seem to think, India has not been in every age the prey of every conqueror. Invaders from beyond the Hindu Koosh have not in any one case subdued the country. The master of the upper plateau of Afghanistan has not been always the master of India; but much more frequently have the masters of North-West India done as they liked with Afghanistan.

During the 2,400 years from Darius to the present time, we have found that five great conquerors have attempted to sweep down upon India through the Hindu Koosh. Two of them, Darius and Genghis Khan, were stopped by the frontier stream. The third, Alexander, was stopped in the Punjab by the second river, on which his men saw the prospect of resistance. Two, Tamerlane and Nadir Shah, reached Delhi. None of the five got further. Now Delhi is no more India than Milan is Italy. Of these five conquerors only two, Darius and Alexander, attempted India when under Hindu rule, and both failed. Not one of the five had to face a centralized Government able to command the united forces of the country. Of the three who marched on India while under Mahomedan rule, Genghis Khan failed to enter it; and Tamerlane and Nadir Shah failed to accomplish more than a predatory raid. The mountain barrier which they had left behind them hampered the operations of them all. The only invader whom in our whole search we have found coming over the Koosh and reaching Delhi, when held by a tolerably strong Government, was Kootloog with his 200,000 Mogul horse, and he appeared before the capital only to be defeated under its walls.

The two men who made a permanent lodgement in the country, Mahmud and Baber, had been, as we have found already, established on the Indian side of the Hindu Koosh.

The whole survey shows that, with the single exception of a brief space of time under the Great Moguls, never until the English domination was India more than a geographical expression. It never till now formed one centralized military power under a single flag. For twenty years under that flag, and guided by truly conservative statesmen, it has enjoyed the golden gift of rest.

In such a survey as we have taken, it is striking how small a space is occupied, in accounts of the various attempts at conquest, by the Hindu Koosh and Afghanistan. There seems no evidence that either of them, or that both together, ever arrested a regularly-planned invasion. It by no means follows that they did not often prevent projects of invasion from being formed; for the 1,300 years which intervened between Alexander and Mahmud—a quiet practical fact—do not sustain the abstract theory of Lord Napier that a mountain barrier is of no use if you only hide behind it. A barrier with somebody hiding behind it is a thing which Lord Napier would be the last in practice to treat as no barrier at all. The Koosh and the Suleiman range have fulfilled an office both in deterring conquerors from attempting to penetrate them, and in making such as did penetrate them feel afterwards uneasy at having them in their rear. If, then, it is of any use to hinder invasions from being undertaken, and to turn them when undertaken into abortions on the frontier, these barriers have been of some use. So far as we know, when a regular army attempted them it always effected its passage, but whenever anybody of consequence was found "hiding behind" them, no army emerged from them in heart to give a good account of the opponent.

We cannot too clearly realize the fact that there is one practical experiment which has never been tried—the experiment of an invader carrying an army across the mountain barrier of India with the knowledge that behind it he would find a united country under a strong government, sure to confront the heads of his columns, as they debouched from

the Afghan passes, with fresh troops, in high discipline resting upon ample reserves.

Probably, Afghanistan without any Afghans, and occupied only by trusty troops, might have increased the security of Acbar's empire; but, with the Afghans and his own brother to boot, it cost him serious trouble. So with Aurungzebe; it was not the hills, valleys, and passes viewed as so much still surface that robbed him of two critical years. It was the Afghan clansmen—who are anything but still—taking advantage of those hills, valleys, and passes.

As to Afghanistan making its master the master of India, it is an idea unsupported by history. The Punjab alone when tolerably united was always a match for Afghanistan and its masters: witness Runjeet Singh in late days, and old Togluck in earlier days.

The mention of Runjeet Singh suggests a practical form of the frontier question. Is there any great probability that Russia would be able to push through Central Asia, through the Hindu Koosh, through Afghanistan, an army more formidable than was the one left by Runjeet Singh, with its three hundred splendid guns, its eighty thousand men, its powerful Sikh *physique*, and its regular French drill? Yet we had twice to bear the full shock of that army fresh and unbroken, fighting close to its base, burning with fanaticism and possessing perfect topographical knowledge. Since that time our political strength has been vastly consolidated. Our army has become more largely European. Our means of concentration, as compared with what they then were, have become as superior as railways are to bridle-paths, and as telegraphs are to the old post-runner, or *dawk*. Our base,—the friendly sea,—has by steam-ships and the Suez Canal become practically nearer. Our frontier was then, not rhetorically but really a haphazard one; now we have the Punjab, and with it a frontier which is not haphazard; but even as it formerly existed was such as well served any one who could well defend it. Its first line is the mouth of the Afghan passes; its second the

Indus; its third the Jehlum; and behind that a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, all well defensible. It is certain that from Darius down to Shere Ali no enemy ever did penetrate that frontier in face of defenders who did not know when they were beaten. And skill may make it vastly stronger. But with our old haphazard frontier of 1845, which lay beyond all the defensible lines just now mentioned, we drove the Sikh army back to its destruction. It is certain that we shall never be more bravely, and it is probable that we shall never be less scientifically commanded than we then were by the noble old mastiff Lord Gough.

The frontier we now have is the same which Darius, Alexander, and Genghis Khan found that they could not prudently leave in their rear. Sir Henry Rawlinson speaks as if they all had crossed the Indus. Only Alexander crossed it; and to him the mouths of the passes and the free passage of the Indus—that is, the first two lines of defence—were given up without a blow, and, indeed, with all aid and comfort, by a rajah who was evidently at odds with Porus, whom we should call the King of Lahore. On the third line Alexander was resisted, not on the fourth, and with both the Beas and the Sutlej unattempted he turned his back. On what did he turn his back? On the prospect of resistance by brave men, in a prosperous country, under settled governments, and with strong array of arms and elephants; for it was what they heard on these points that made his soldiers first hesitate and then absolutely refuse to cross.*

We watched the movements of Russia during both the Crimean and the late Turko-Russian war with a direct view to the question stated above as to whether Russia could, so far from her base and against such obstacles as exist, march and supply an army strong enough to survive the losses it would have to endure at our hands in crossing our successive lines of defence. The Crimea and Bulgaria were much nearer her base, and after what she did there one cannot feel increased respect

* These causes of reluctance are clearly stated by Arrian, v. 25.

either for the sense or courage of those who tremble at what she would do beyond the Soleiman Hills. Perhaps the alarmists have never pushed the question far beyond the point where it was left twenty-seven years ago by Count Bjornstjerna, who, though a Swede, wrote on our Indian Empire with a good sense that would do an Englishman credit. His position was that Russia could not, so far from her base and across such obstacles, place in front of our forces an army large enough and sufficiently well supplied to cope with them; and that against them a small army, such as she could send, would be powerless.*

Mountstewart Elphinstone tells how, in speaking to a fine old Afghan, he descanted on the blessings of security under a strong government. The old man replied with warmth: "We are content with discord, we are content with alarms, we are content with blood, but we will never be content with a master."† Our first attempt, about forty years ago, to impose upon them a master, leading as it did to the annihilation of a small British army, brought upon our Indian Empire the sharpest trial through which it has had to pass, save that of the Sepoy mutiny. Suppose that these two events had come together, who will say what might have been the result? So long as Afghanistan was not in our possession, it was simply impossible that an Afghan insurrection and a Sepoy mutiny should come upon us at one and the same time. But from the day when we enter into occupation of Afghanistan not only do we render it possible, but we make it the daily and hourly temptation of our enemies to bring it about. Those who have carried us into Afghanistan have done so from dread of the evils that would attend a Russian invasion. However great those evils would have been when Russia would have fought further from her base, having in her rear the Afghans in addition to other doubtful Asiatics, there was one complication of evils which could not have attended it: a Russian

* The British Empire in the East, p. 243.

† Kingdom of Caubul, vol. i. p. 231.

invasion, an Afghan insurrection, and a Sepoy mutiny all occurring together. The policy adopted by English statesmen, and to the maintenance of which Viceroy more than one had pledged their faith, rendered impossible that conjunction of malign stars. But Lord Beaconsfield, treating the word of Viceroy as if it was no more than private conversation, has trodden their faith under foot; and has passed in scorn over the policy of British statesmen. In so doing he has not only presented to Russia the possibility of combining against us the invasion, the insurrection, and the mutiny, but has offered a standing temptation to attempt it—a temptation so strong that to resist it will require not only virtue but wisdom on the part of her statesmen. The vast advantage thus gratuitously bestowed on Russia would have altered the conditions of our power in India even had our hands still been free in Western Asia. But they are henceforth tied. Could Russia at any time succeed in complicating our affairs in India, she would only have to attack the Turks from Kars, and we, while struggling for our own empire, should be compelled to defend theirs, or else to break our word and lose our character.

We had in the Mediterranean a scientific frontier, the sea; but the sea is there our frontier no longer; we have now, practically, the haphazard frontier of the Turkish possessions. The gift of nature and the fruits of the mature statesmanship of ages have been hung away behind our backs. Apart from the complications already indicated, had we at any time a war with France, America, Italy, Germany, or any other power, we should have to wait on the will of Russia to fix the particular moment in a day of disadvantage at which we should be called to defend against her attack both the Indian and the Turkish frontier. These are grave considerations;—so grave that men who at the height of the Indian Mutiny never felt a misgiving, who as to the result of the petty fight with Shere Ali would smile at a misgiving, do none the less feel great misgivings as to the ulterior effects of the policy which has brought about the present bloodshed.